

If You Enjoy Blueberries, Thank Her

She Developed Today's Blueblooded Fruit From Wild Berries

BY DON FAIRBAIRN

MISS Elizabeth "Blueberry" White, you might call this gray-haired, sturdy little woman, and not make her angry.

Her whole life is blueberries—and cranberries. She works and dreams among blueberries, she eats blueberries, and the chances are that if there hadn't been a Miss White you never would have tasted those delicious little globes of purple joy.

Miss White did not invent the blueberry, because you can't invent a berry. Neither did she discover them, for the "swamp huckleberry" grew wild in the Jersey flats long before Columbus arrived. Indians ate them. All she has done is to spend the past 35 years hiking around Burlington county, beating the swamplands for blueberry bushes and when she found them, taking them home and developing the wild berry by cross pollination and selection into a tamed, marketable fruit.

90 P. C. of Crop Grown Near Her

All of the blueberry crop on the market today was either raised by Miss White or grown from bushes originally cultivated on her ancestral estate at Whitesbog. Ninety per cent. of the blueberry crop is raised in her locality, about four miles from Browns Mills and New Lisbon.

This birth-of-a-berry tale dates from 1910 when Dr. Frederick V. Coville's book on blueberry culture was published by the Department of Agriculture. Miss White wrote to him and from their correspondence grew a plan of co-operation.

"I think we contributed about equally," says Miss White. "He had the theory and I the practical knowledge. Neither of us probably would have got anywhere without the aid of the other."

At that time Dr. Coville, who died last January, had only two fine plant specimens. Between 1911 and 1916 Mrs. White found 100 more, giving him many of the seedlings. Whitesbog became an informal Department of Agriculture experimental station, Dr. Coville frequently visiting there.

Berries An Inch Wide

In her searches among the Jersey pine barrens Miss White usually found the wild berry growing about the size of a pea. A few were the size of a marble. She collected



HER LIFE'S THE BERRIES . . . Miss Elizabeth White and some of her cultivated blueberry bushes which are taller than she

bushes that bore the largest and sweetest fruit. Although she has found a few bushes bearing fruit actually one inch in diameter, the blueberry you find in the market today is generally of the five-eighths inch size.

Surprisingly the berry bush cannot live in a well-balanced fertile soil, requiring rather a sour, acid, somewhat sandy home. Miss White homestead offered the ideal environment. Whitesbog was the home of her grandfather, James A. Fenwick, cranberry farmer and a descendant of one of the earliest colonists in the State. He died in 1882. Joseph J. White, her father, managed the property after Fenwick's death. Miss Elizabeth, as the berry pickers call her, took an active interest in the business from girlhood.

So heavy did the mail come in to Whitesbog after the beginning of blueberry culture that a post-office was established on her private property in 1924. Today, Whitesbog is a thriving little townlet. It has streets, 14 better-grade homes for all-year 'round employes, a general store. As many as 600 employes, many from Philadelphia,

live on her grounds at peak seasons.

Miss White is director of the Blueberry Co-operative with headquarters at New Lisbon. Sixty-six farmer members, a few from the Wilmington, N. C., district, produced 45,000 half-bushel crates in last month's harvest.

What does Miss White think of her life in the isolated Jersey community? "Why, it's the berries!"

CHEERFUL CHERUB

I get paid for being cheerful
But I've got to take a rest.
I've been grinning for so long now
It's a treat to feel depressed.



Can Go Far— a Nazi

ral Average Lad of
Baton in Knapsack